

The New Jersey Shore...



Miniature armada of bluefish fanciers assembles at sea, many miles to the east of Sandy Hook.

FISHING for FUN

LIGHTS twinkle on in four homes in Essex and Morris counties as Shorty, Doc, Al and Red climb out of bed on Sunday at 5 a.m. with an alertness they can't possibly match all week long when they arise at 7 a.m. for work. This is different; this is the day Shorty, Doc, Al and Red pretty much set aside to pit their wits against the wary fish in the Atlantic Ocean.

Elsewhere the same morning—in New York, in Philadelphia, in Newton, in Vineland and hundreds of other spots—other men (and a few women)

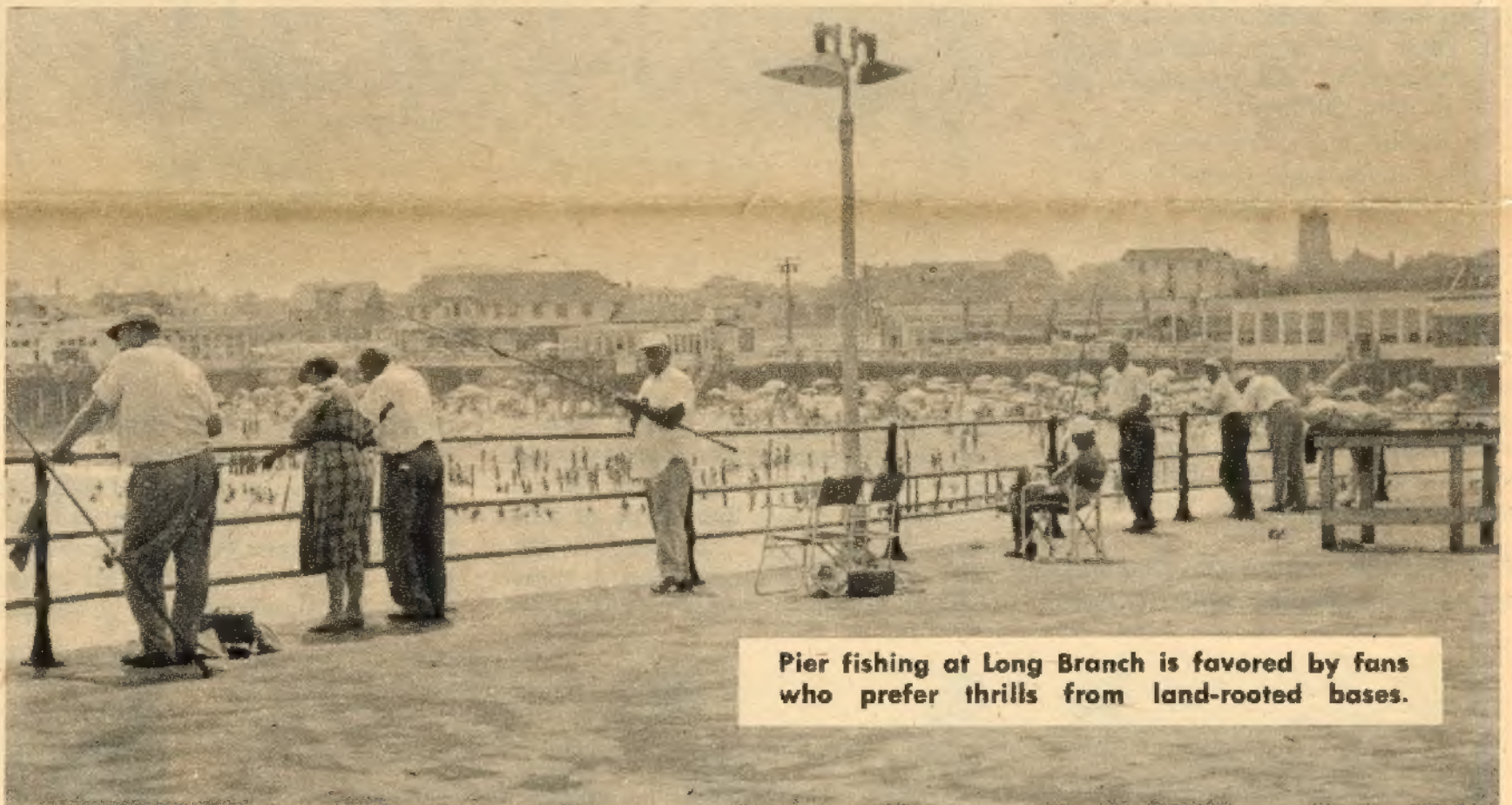
This is the 17th of a series of articles on the New Jersey Shore. The concluding installment, which will appear in next Sunday's magazine, will consider some of the natural "treasures" to be found along the seaside from Sandy Hook to Cape May.

also get ready for deep sea fishing with the stumbling heavy-handedness accompanying the ritual of getting out without disturbing the family. Already dawn reddens the east, the time has come to hurry.

Down to the shore the early risers stream. Some set out for the party boats and the charter boats berthed at nearly 40 basins and docks between Raritan and Delaware bays. Many hustle to rent some of the five or six thousand rowboats tied up at a hun-

ON THE COVER

Salt water anglers in action over the well-stocked fishing holes off New Jersey's coast.



Pier fishing at Long Branch is favored by fans who prefer thrills from land-rooted bases.

Economy of Many Shore Communities from Raritan to Delaware Bays Is Geared to Annual \$30 Million Sport Fishing 'Industry'

By JOHN T. CUNNINGHAM

dred liveries along the coast. Others go to seek good spots on a score of fishing piers, to get elbow room on a shore river bank or a rock jetty, to cast in the surf before the bathing suit crowd arrives hours later.

Together they form a mighty army

of humans engaging in New Jersey's biggest participation sport—salt water fishing. There is no positive way of knowing how many fishermen actually seek the blues and weaks and porgies and stripers and cod and other fine-finned friends, but reliable experts

figure as many as one million different persons fish along the New Jersey shore during the year.

THE hardy ones fish all year, of course; men who wouldn't walk to the corner store for a newspaper on a Tuesday night in January lest they catch cold find health values (or some value, at least) in riding a boat out to seek cod the next frigid Saturday or Sunday morning. Generally speaking, however, these year-arounders are but the rear guard engaged in a holding action; the main army doesn't appear until June, July and August, when summer residents are about.

These are the vacation months, and fishermen haunt the docks and piers and jetties because it's vacation time.

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SPORT FISHING

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Coincidentally, though, the fish are pleasantly cooperative—June, July and August just happen to be the best fishing months. No one in his right mind can declare that the fish aren't doing their scaly best to be cordial.

Shorty and Doc and Al and Red enjoy most these summer months (although they also are among the wintertime cod seekers). They are old-timers, possibly sufficiently old-timer enough or affluent enough to hire a charter boat for their very own at \$50 to \$75 per day. If not, they pay their \$4 to \$5 and board one of the party or "head" (so much a head) boats to join 50 to 100 others for a day of sport and/or seasickness.

AS old-timers, Shorty and gang invariably go to the same dock, board the same boat, speak the same greeting to the same captain, rig their same gear in the same way, share the same happy ease they've shared a hundred or more times before.

"Shorty," says Doc every Sunday, "you get over on the other side with the rookies, unless you want to stay over here with us professionals and bait my hook." Shorty does the same slow burn he's been burning since 1935 and snorts: "Ah, you guys is just along to open the beer."

Meanwhile, out on the docks as sailing time approaches (anywhere from 6:30 to 8 a.m. in summer months), activity proceeds with orderly chaos. Music blares from loudspeakers, refreshment stands dispense breakfasts meant for cast-iron stomachs and tackle shops do a lively business. Mates from party boats try politely to steer newcomers to a particular boat. Each arriving party totes enough food and drink to last a week. Everywhere there is conversation.

OLD-TIMERS (whose Old Timeness may have started last week) bemoan



Contrasting scenes, although made some years ago, are typical of prevailing conditions at Brielle Yacht Basin on any midsummer day selected by fishing devotees for seagoing excursions.



the rookies. Says one: "You hook a fish. Them amateurs stand around with their feet in their mouths, get you all tangled up. I lost 300 yards of line that way last year. No more. I just yell, 'Coming through!' and I come through." That evidently means some-

thing to his listeners. They nod sympathetically, at any rate.

Finally sailing time is at hand; sailing time in summer being when the head boats have enough "heads," and in off season being when all's aboard who's coming aboard. Off go the party

boats in more-or-less regular procession, since a captain doesn't dare delay his "heads" much beyond the time the first boat slips away.

Out chug the boats, loaded with hope and eagerness. Shorty and Doc and Al and Red maybe have a beer, or, in the kindly way of men who recognize kindred souls, help a wide-eyed little boy straighten out his gear. Through the inlets and out the bays swarm the party boats, out to the deep holes and the sunken wrecks where porgies, sea bass, tautog, ling and whiting abound.

PARTY boats embrace a wide range of craft, anything from 26-foot cabin cruisers to 110-foot converted sub chasers, with their relationship essentially being the willingness to take fishermen aboard at so much apiece (\$4 to \$5, including bait). The average neophyte is introduced to "deep sea" fishing this way, particularly if he just ups some morning and decides to go fishing.

Often, however, the neophyte gets his initiation as one of five or six fellows from "the office" or the lodge or the Sunday Afternoon Napping and Poker Club who decide to charter a boat of their very own for a day. This represents a somewhat glamorous fishing experience, featuring trolling up to 12 miles or more at sea. It has the added advantage of limited numbers around to tangle the lines or to drink up the beer.

Charter boats are large cabin cruisers, from 26 to 45 feet, and can be readily differentiated from other boats by their tremendous outriggers—used as fish finders or as a means of adding trolling lines. The boat, skipper, tackle and lures are for hire by the day at a fee ranging from \$50 to \$75.

UNLIKE the hardier head boat captains, charter boat skippers aren't apt to be active along the New Jersey shore until April, when the striped bass migrate northward along the coast. Then, in October or November when the striped bass return to their



Gaffing a good-sized pollack on a party (or head-boat). View of stern (left), jammed with gear, is one of confusion only to landlubbers.

winter homes, the charter boat skippers pull in their outriggers and either go into drydock or head for Florida.

Naturally there is a difference between the fish hauled in by the "heads" and those boated by the "charters." The former get such as porgy, sea bass, fluke, ling, cod, blackfish, mackerel and weakfish. The "charters" seek bluefish, striped bass, mackerel and fluke, perhaps some tuna or albacore—with emphasis on the blues, those fighting fish which also are good to eat. Still, when the "big ones" aren't being chummy, charter boats have been known to settle for a catch of pan fish.

While "deep sea" fishing is the most glamorous, most costly, and probably most successful form of angling along the New Jersey coast, it is far from all. Thousands of fishermen set foot on party boats or charter boats only on rare occasions, if ever. These are the fishermen who prefer rowboats or U-drives, who cast from the surf into the pounding waves or who fish from the banks and jetties and piers.

Rowboats (once propelled only by muscle power, now usually outboard-motor driven) are thick in the bays and rivers—Raritan Bay, Barnegat Bay, the bays and sounds in Atlantic and Cape May counties, and on such rivers as the Navesink, Shrewsbury, Shark, Manasquan, Toms and Mullica.

IT isn't difficult to find a rowboat livery. A recent survey showed nearly 100 rowboat leasers, many of them with 75 or more hulls for hire (one in Sea Bright having 249 rowboats.) The rowboat fisherman is usually skilled and knowledgeable. He knows the fishing spots (or claims he does), and he anchors over them or drifts over them, casting all day long or trolling for hours on end, hoping for a strike from a weak, a striper, a blue or a bottom-loving fluke.

Possibly Shorty and Doc and friends and all the thousands who fish each day from boats wouldn't acknowledge it, but the most natural shore fishing



Winner of a daily pool, Al Petrocco of Dover poses with part of 173 ling he boated on trip out of Brielle. He did it by using two rods.



Ray Fromm of Lavallette with 787-pound tuna he caught in 1950 for state record. Big "tunny" have been scarce offshore for last seven years.

of all is that done from the banks and docks on the rivers and bays. True enough, the skilled and the semi-skilled gather for this fishing, but this is also the place where the little boy or girl with a drop line gets a start.

From the banks and docks the youngsters graduate to the jetties and fishing piers and party boats or perhaps become one of the thousands of surf fishermen who persist in enjoying what many believe has become a dying sport as beaches grow more and more commercial. Surf fishing opportunities today are nowhere near what they were 20 years ago.

The surf fisherman is somewhat of a lone wolf, although occasionally they gather in pairs or threes. Generally, though, the surf fisherman stands by himself, seemingly oblivious of the deserted beach spread on either side of him in off-season or in off-hours during the height of the swimming season.

IT'S not uncommon to see the surf fisherman trudging in solitary bliss up the streets of seaside towns as darkness starts to fall in summertime. He carries an impressive amount of equipment, including chair and lamp, and he sits or stands on the beach for three or four hours. There are those who suspicion he gets as much joy out of contemplating the sea and in flexing his muscles to cast out beyond the breakers as he does in catching fish.

Indeed, if fish were the main object, then those who fish from the banks and jetties and those who surf-cast could do better on a party boat. A state survey showed in 1953 that 6,600 men fishing from bay banks caught an average of only 0.69 fish per man hour. Also, 2,800 men fishing in the surf caught an average of 0.37 fish per man hour. The same survey showed, incidentally, that the average value of fish caught on 20,000 fishing trips was 72 cents' worth of fish at Fulton Fish Market prices! These averages are not likely to make the commercial trawlers obsolete.

CERTAINLY sport fishing shouldn't be measured in poundages or dollar values, nor should it be measured in terms of the money it attracts each year to New Jersey coastal towns, but the fact remains that sport fishing is

a major industry by the sea. There is a tremendous investment in docks, boats and equipment—and, just the money expended at day's end on film to record the catch must insure a third-quarter dividend for the photographic suppliers.

Figures which are generally agreed to be most conservative put the number of man-days spent fishing between May and December along the shore at three million. Say each man-day means \$10 (again highly conservative). That's a minimum 30-million-dollar industry which gives economic stability to such communities as Belmar, Brielle, Atlantic Highlands, Barnegat Light, Beach Haven, Forked River, Ocean City, Wildwood, Cape May and a score of other towns, including Atlantic City.

If measuring sport fishing in terms of money is unsporting, then consider it in terms of fish caught. There is one group of salt water anglers which grumbles that commercial fishermen are getting all the fish. Roy Younger and James Zamos, who conducted an intensive study for the state between 1952 and 1954, came to the significant conclusion that—excluding menhaden—sportsmen caught almost as much fish as the men who earn their living by fishing.

Messrs. Younger and Zamos say that noncommercial anglers in 1953 caught 13,302,000 pounds of edible fish, compared with 16,735,000 pounds caught by the business fishermen. Considering the differences in equipment and methods, the slight disparity is striking.

THE sports and commercial interests have been clashing for almost a cen-

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Four of the most common classes of fish caught in winter and spring: (from top) cod, ling, whiting and black. Others, in season, include porgy, sea bass, fluke, stripers and mackerel.

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tury and probably will go right on clashing as long as the sea lures both. Undoubtedly there are commercial fishermen who have not the slightest interest in conservation, but they share that disinterest with the sort of fishing hogs who, as Henry Schaefer of The Newark News has written, "catch enough fish to feed 400 families or to fertilize a 40-acre field."

Sport fishing in New Jersey waters goes back to colonial days. Early histories are filled with tales of sportsmen from Philadelphia who frequented the barren stretches of southern New Jersey's coast seeking fish. Nevertheless, not until the 1870s and 1880s brought an influx of new families lured by the railroads, did sport fishing become both a vital industry and a big sport.

Nearly all of the 19th century fishing was in the bays and rivers, although an occasional commercial fisherman would take anglers outside on the ocean if his pound nets weren't bulging. Cat-boat captains at Toms River offered their vessels for charter at \$5 per day and other skippers at ports all the way down to Cape May sailed occasionally with chartered fishing parties aboard.

ONE writer of the 1880s described the Shrewsbury Rocks as excellent fishing grounds—and they are that to this very day. He told of Sea Bright fishermen who would take sportsmen out for fees ranging from \$5 to \$20, "the higher charge being made when the fishing is very good and when, indeed, it is very hard to get a fisherman to take you out at any price."

Better bargains could be struck at Asbury Park, where sailboats rested at anchor offshore, ready to take passengers fishing at \$1 a head. One famous Asbury captain was Harry Maddox, whose big sailing vessels, the Emma B. and the Carib, made two trips daily from the Asbury Park beachfront to the deep sea holes.

Surf fishing had its devotees those days, too. An article in Harper's Weekly for July 3, 1880, tells of bluefish two and three feet long being hauled in by surf fishermen at Asbury Park. Such bluefish would be amazing today, but there are those who recollect that once big blues were so plentiful on the New Jersey shore that farmers came down to the shore and carted them off by the wagonload for fertilizer.

Three factors — ever-improving transportation, perfection of marine motors and leisure time for working men—have combined in the 20th century to bring New Jersey shore sport fishing to the high economic and recreational position it now enjoys.

FIRST of all, the railroads between 1890 and 1920 ran highly successful "Fishermen's Specials" out of Philadelphia to Atlantic City, Wildwood and Cape May. The trains pulled out of Philadelphia before dawn, thundered across the state in darkness and



U-drive boats at Beach Haven docks, one of the over 100 basins along shore catering to wants and needs of fishermen.

rolled up to the piers at dawn. Accounts of the day tell of coaches "bristling" with fishing poles protruding from windows.

The automobile, whose evolution paralleled the perfection of inboard and outboard motors and larger cruising yachts, killed the train specials but built up a still larger potential clientele on wheels. Then, after Shark River and Manasquan inlets on the north shore and Cold Spring Inlet at Cape May were completed in the 1920s and early 1930s, new boat basins sprang up. Brielle, nearly deserted in World War I days, became by 1935 a vital sport fishing center and is today the largest sport fishing area on the East coast (some say the largest in the world).

Finally, the 20th century has brought leisure time to nearly everyone. Once upon a time, even as late as 1930, only the wealthy could really afford deep sea fishing. The ever-increasing pay of the working man, on the rise in the late 1930s, has picked up pace since World War II. All recreation, including sport fishing, is within the easy reach of most people.

ONE excellent example of the broadening of the sport fishing base is tuna fishing. Thirty years ago a man had to be wealthy enough to afford a yacht of his own before he took out after the great game fish. During the 1930s it became common for groups of five or six to charter their own boats and head out for the tuna banks. Many a relatively unskilled fisherman brought in tuna weighing upward of 300 pounds.

Tuna fishing is in abeyance at the moment, but its return is possible any time. After splendid catches in the middle 1930s the giant fish seemingly disappeared—to the extent that in 1949, 300 anglers in the annual U.S. Atlantic Tuna Tournament out of Brielle boated exactly five tuna. The tournament moved out of New Jersey in 1950, ironically as big tuna re-

turned with a rush for a brief time in July and August 1950. That year Ray Fromm of Lavallette fought and conquered a 787-pounder on a boat out of Brielle for the state tuna record. Big "tunny" have been scarce since 1950.

OTHER fish have come and gone in cycles. The bluefish has done the same appearing and disappearing act through the years. At the moment blues are running well again. As one Point Pleasant captain put it when bluefish returned a few years ago, "We were so glad to see them back we didn't even ask where they'd been!"

Salt water angling in the past decade has picked up many a fresh water addict who has tired of standing four or five deep along upland trout streams. Again quoting our Henry Schaefer, "Many have learned they can have more exciting action in one day chumming for bluefish than they can hope to have in a month of fishing on any of the state's overcrowded bass lakes or trout streams."

Mr. Schaefer is an advocate of light tackle for deep sea fishing, particularly for blues or albacore. "If the object is sport," he has written, "the fly, spin and plug casting equipment very definitely belongs on the boat."

FISHERMEN are not likely to agree on tackle, on bait, or on exactly what kind of weather is best for fishing. That's what makes them fishermen, in a way. The possibility of discussion and debate is what brings them down to the docks an hour or more before any boat could possibly sail. They don't expect to be convinced or to convince anyone else, for all the vehemence of their arguments at times. They just like the comfort of being with those who share their fun.

This sort of thing is likely to confuse the newcomer, of course, but he would do well to put himself in the hands of the skipper or the mates on

his first trip (after that he's picked up enough lingo to pose as a real old veteran). One point to remember: The captain is as eager to catch fish as any "head." Three or four trips without fish would put the skipper land-side.

Captains pick up reputations as fish-finding people. Some anglers swear their favorite skippers are better than electronic fish finders. There is a fierce loyalty on the part of many fishermen to certain skippers, and, in all truth, some do have an uncanny knack of locating fish and coaxing them to jump at the hooks of the customers.

If the beginner is confused as to where he can locate a boat, there is good reason. It's not because there are too few boats; it's because there are so many. Thus, how to find a boat, how to find a skipper?

ONE way to start would be to secure for 10 cents The Newark News' handy "Where They Are — Fishing Maps." Another would be to look up the pamphlet "New Jersey's Marine Sport Industry," published by the State Department of Conservation and Economic Development in 1955 as Miscellaneous Report No. 16. The latter has a good general listing of areas and facilities (not by basin name, but by location).

In the long run, nonetheless, the fisherman must choose his own boat—because he likes her looks, because a friend in the office suggested her, because she has his wife's name, because she has the name of a horse who once won the Kentucky Derby. Or, he might just walk down to one of the scores of docks and say, "Eeny, meeny, miney, mo . . ."

After all, Shorty and Doc and Al and Red picked their boat and their skipper 20 years ago by the "eeny, meeny" method. It was a good choice, good enough to get them out of bed nearly every Sunday at a time when most people are turning over for another good four-hour sleep.